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Substitute specification in clean form, without markings.

PEDESTAL

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[0001] CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0002] This application is a continuation-in-part of copending Application Serial No. 10/117,686, filed April 5, 2003, now Patent No. 6,688,573. Application Serial No. 5 10/117,686 is a continuation-in-part of, and claims priority under 35 U.S.C. 120 from, U.S. Application Serial No. 09/905,702, now abandoned, filed August 2, 2001, which resulted from the conversion under 37 CFR 1.59 (c) (3) of provisional application Serial No. 60/310,138, filed Aug. 2, 2001, by Petra Reed, into a non-provisional application. The disclosure of each of the above-identified applications is incorporated herein by 10 reference for all purposes.

[0003] BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] This invention relates to pedestals. The term "pedestal" is used herein to 15 denote a structure which can be placed on the earth, on the floor of a building, or on an elevated surface (for example a buffet or other table, sideboard or desk) and which will support objects (e.g. tableware of all kinds) placed on top of the pedestal. For example, pedestals are widely used in the catering and hospitality industry to support serving dishes, containers, platters, trays, jugs, glasses, bottles, cutlery, ice sculptures and 20 flower vases at positions chosen for functional and/or decorative reasons.

[0005] SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] I have discovered, in accordance with the present invention, new and 25 useful pedestals comprising a pedestal base and a plurality of (i.e. two or more) support members fitted into channels in the upper surface of the pedestal base. In most uses, the pedestal base has a lower surface resting on the floor or on a table or other elevated surface, and an upper surface which, with the support members, can support objects on top of the pedestal. Where reference is made herein to upper, lower,

vertical, horizontal etc., those references assume that the pedestal base is being used in this way.

[0007] The pedestals of the invention can be easily assembled and 5 disassembled. They can be in the form of kits containing one or more pedestal bases and a plurality of support members which can be assembled with the pedestal base(s) to form the new and useful pedestals of the invention. The components of a kit can be packed into any suitable container, optionally having compartments for different 10 components, for example a fabric bag. A kit comprising a plurality of separate pedestal bases and support members can be assembled into a wide variety of pedestals of different functionalities, shapes, dimensions and decorative appearances. The invention makes it possible for users to transport a kit of relatively small dimensions to, for example, a particular catering or display event, and to construct, on site, one or more 15 pedestals adapted to the particular requirements of the event. After the event, the pedestal(s) can be easily disassembled, cleaned (for example in commercial washing facilities) and repacked as a compact kit for transport to storage or to another event.

[0008] This invention provides a pedestal which comprises 20
(1) a pedestal base having an upper surface which defines at least two pairs of open channels, each pair of open channels being sized and spaced so that a straight support member of constant cross section can be slidably fitted into the pair of channels, with a midsection of the support member lying between the open channels and having an open space underneath it, and the pairs of channels being placed on the upper surface so that, when a straight support 25 member is fitted into each pair of channels, the support members are parallel to each other; and
(2) at least two support members, each support member being fitted into one of the pairs of channels in the upper surface of the pedestal base, and the support members having top surfaces which lie in a single horizontal 30 plane which is higher than the upper surface of the pedestal base.

the pedestal base comprising two spaced-apart wall members which are connected to each other only by the support members, each wall member having one of the open channels of each pair of channels.

5 [0009] One or more of each pair of channels can optionally have associated therewith at least one additional channel which is sized and spaced so that a support member slidably fitted into the pair of channels can also be slidably fitted into the additional channel(s). The additional channel or channels can be in the same pedestal base or a different pedestal base.

10 [0010] The term "slidably fitted" is used herein to mean that, when the pedestal base is upright, with the open channels exposed, straight support members of constant cross section can be placed in respective pairs of the channels, and are supported by the channels so that the position of each support member can be changed by sliding the support member within the channels. The term "comprises" is used herein in its normal sense in patent law to mean that other components are optionally present.

15 [0011] The wall members can be parallelepipeds, preferably substantially rectangular parallelepipeds.

20 [0012] BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] The invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which Figures 1-3 are top, side and end views of a pedestal of the invention.

25 [0014] DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

30 [0015] In the Summary of the Invention above, in the Detailed Description of the Invention, and the Claims below, and in the accompanying drawings, reference is made to particular features of the invention. It is to be understood that the disclosure of the

invention in this specification includes all possible combinations of such particular features. For example, where a particular feature is disclosed in the context of a particular aspect or embodiment of the invention, or a particular drawing or a particular claim, that feature can also be used, to the extent possible, in combination with and/or 5 in the context of other particular aspects, embodiments, drawings or claims of the invention, and in the invention generally.

[0016] In one embodiment, the pedestal base comprises at least 3 pairs of channels, the number of the support members is equal to the number of pairs of 10 channels; each of the support members is a straight support member slidably fitted into one of the pairs of channels; and the support members have the same cross section.

[0017] Pedestal Bases

15 [0018] The pedestal base in the pedestals of the invention comprises two or more spaced-apart wall members, each preferably having the same height, for example a first wall member comprising a plurality of first open channels and a second wall member comprising a plurality of second open channels, each of the first open channels forming, 20 with one of the second open channels, one of the defined pairs of channels.

[0019] The pedestal base preferably provides least three pairs, sometimes at least four pairs, for example 5, 6 or 7 pairs, but generally not more than 12 pairs, for example not more than 8 pairs, of open channels. In some embodiments of the 25 invention, the upper surface of the pedestal base provides channels, but the lower surface does not. In other embodiments, both the upper surface and the lower surface include channels. Each pair of open channels is sized and positioned on the upper surface so that a straight support member of constant cross-section can be slidably fitted into the pair of channels. Preferably, all the open channels have cross-sections 30 such that support members of the same cross-section can be slidably fitted into each of

them. The pairs of channels are positioned so that when a straight support member is slidably fitted into each pair of channels, all the support members are parallel to each other, and preferably so that the support members are equally spaced from each other.

5 [0020] The two channels making up a pair of channels are often mirror images of each other, and the dimensions of the pairs of channels depend in part on the angular relationship between the surface and the support member.

10 [0021] Often, the upper surface of the pedestal base, except where it is interrupted by the channels, lies in a single, preferably horizontal, plane. Similarly, the lower surface of the pedestal base preferably also lies in a single, preferably horizontal, plane. However, it is also possible for one or both of the surfaces to be irregular, for example to have a repeating waveform. Any irregularity in the upper surface preferably does not cause the upper surface to extend above the upper surface of the support members. Any irregularity in the lower surface preferably does not prevent the lower surface from resting stably on a flat, preferably horizontal, surface. It is possible for one or both of the upper and lower surfaces to lie in a plane which is not horizontal, for example when the pedestal base is to be placed upon a surface of known and regular slope, or when it is desirable for the upper surfaces of the support members to lie in a plane inclined to the horizontal.

15 [0022] In one embodiment, at least 2 pairs of apertures, preferably at least 3 pairs of apertures, for example 5, 6 or 7 pairs of apertures, are sized and placed in the wall of the pedestal base so that additional support members (whose cross-section may 20 be the same as or different from the cross-section of the support members placed in the channels in the upper surface) can be inserted through each pair of apertures to form a platform within the pedestal base. Such a platform can be used, for example, to support a solid fuel heater or an ice tray or bucket, in order to heat or cool a serving dish placed on the support members or on a cap placed on top of the pedestal base in place of the 25 support members; optionally, such a cap is apertured.

[0023] Alternatively or additionally, the apertures can serve a decorative purpose.

[0024] It is possible for the pedestal base to have open channels in its lower 5 surface as well as its upper surface, in which case the open channels can be such that support members placed in the upper surface are parallel to, or at an angle to, for example a right angle to, support members placed in the lower surface.

[0025] Support Members

10 [0026] The pedestals of the invention include at least two support members. The dimensions of the support members and of the channels in the pedestal base into which they fit should be correlated so that straight support members can be slidably fitted into the channels.

15 [0027] The cross-section of the support members and the height of the open channels in the pedestal base are correlated so that the top surfaces of the support members lie in a single horizontal plane which is substantially higher than a horizontal plane containing the upper surface of the pedestal base. For example, the distance 20 between the planes can be 0.3 to 0.7 times the height of the support members. For example, the distance can be such that a second pedestal base, preferably a pedestal base having a channel-containing upper surface identical to the channel-containing upper surface of the first pedestal base) can be placed "upside-down" on top of the support members and can be slid along the support members.

25 [0028] The support members can have any cross-section which enables them to be fitted, preferably slidably fitted, into the open channels. Preferably all the support members have the same cross-section. Preferably the support members have a cross-section having three or more equal sides so that it is not necessary to rotate the 30 member in order to achieve the right orientation for the open channel. It is also

preferred, in order to enhance the lateral stability of the support members, once they have been placed in the open channels, that each side of the support member has a vertical section adjacent to a vertical section of the channel, for example a square, hexagonal or octagonal cross-section. A square cross-section is particularly preferred.

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[0029] Preferably all the support members are straight. However, although, as noted above, the open channels in the pedestal base must be such that they will accept a plurality of straight members, it is not necessary that each, or even any, of the support members is straight throughout its length. It is preferred, however, that each support member comprises straight sections which can be slidably fitted into the open channels. The support members can also include location devices intended to make it easier to achieve desired configurations.

[0030] The support members can have any suitable dimensions. When the support member has a square cross-section, each side of the square can for example be 0.25 to 3, or 0.25 to 2, preferably 0.5 to 1.5, in. long. When the support member has a different cross-section, the peripheral length of the cross-section can for example be 0.75 to 12, preferably 2 to 6, in. The length of each support member must be sufficient that it is supported in at least two channels of a pedestal base.

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[0031] The distance between the adjacent support members should be small enough to ensure that objects likely to be placed on the pedestal will be stably supported by the support members. Thus, this distance is generally not more than 2.5 in., preferably not more than 2.0 in., for example 0.25 to 2.5 in., preferably 1.0 to 2.0 in.

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[0032] The support members can be a solid and/or hollow. They can also be telescopic.

[0033] Pedestals including Two or More Pedestal Bases

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[0034] The pedestals of the present invention can include two or more pedestal bases as defined. In such pedestals, each support member is preferably slidably fitted into a pair of open channels in each pedestal base. However, unless it is also possible for one or more (including all) of the support members to be slidably fitted into a pair of 5 open channels in one pedestal base and a single open channel in another pedestal base.

[0035] Pedestal Bases including Accessories

10 [0036] The pedestal bases can also be used to support accessories in addition to the support members. For example, apertures in the wall members, or ledges or hooks on the surfaces of the wall members, can be used to support ice trays or sources of heat in order to cool or to heat food placed on the support members. Other useful accessories have

15 (a) lower portions designed to engage, optionally slidably, the upper surface of at least one support member, so that the accessory is supported on top of the support member, or

(b) upper portions designed to engage, optionally slidably, at least one support member, so that the accessory hangs below the support member.

20 Such an accessory can serve to support two or more additional support members which extend at an angle, for example a right angle, to the support members engaged by the accessory.

[0037] Materials for the Pedestal Bases and Support Members.

25 The pedestal bases and support members can be made of any material having properties suitable for the way in which the pedestal is to be used. For general-purpose use, metal is a preferred material. However, it is also possible to use natural or synthetic polymeric materials, or wood, to obtain particular functional or aesthetic results and/or to 30 strike an economic compromise between cost and performance. High melting synthetic

polymers, for example polyphenylene sulfides and polyether ether ketones, can be used when a heat resistant pedestal is needed. Other materials that can be used, when their properties are suitable for the way in which the pedestal is to be used, include rigid polyvinyl chloride, polymethyl methacrylate, acrylate resins, liquid crystal polyesters, 5 polycarbonates and cellulosic materials, for example corrugated paper products. Preferably, the material has a matte finish, so that it does not show fingerprints, is resistant to staining by food and beverages, and is resistant to detergents and other materials used in commercial washing systems. We prefer to use aluminum which has been finished so that it has a gray, metallic appearance.

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[0038] Preferably, the pedestal bases and support members are free of crevices which might trap food or bacteria; for this reason, the presence of screws in the pedestals and support members is preferably avoided.

15 **[0039]** Referring now to the drawings, Figures 1-3 show a pedestal of the invention comprising a pedestal base composed of three separate wall members 1A, 1B and 1C, each having four open channels in its upper surface. Four support members 2 are slidably fitted into the open channels.